In The Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A milking machine cylinder comprising:

a flexible element; and

at least one sensor element which detects [[~~at least~~]] a substantial weight [[~~relief of~~]] on the flexible element [[~~in order~~]] to trigger a start signal for a milking process.

2. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the sensor element emits a start signal ~~is emitted~~ as the weight [[~~relief of~~]] on the flexible element exceeds a predetermined threshold value.

3. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim [[~~1 or~~]] 2, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the predetermined threshold value is variable.

4. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the predetermined threshold value is independent of an operating vacuum.

5. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein at least one biasing element is provided.

6. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the predetermined threshold value is influenced by the biasing element.

7. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the flexible element is coupled to a movable element ~~such as a sleeve or a piston~~.

8. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the flexible element is configured as a chain [[~~or a rope~~]].

9. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the flexible element is coupled to the milking unit.

10. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein at least one sensor element is selected from a group of sensors ~~comprising~~ consisting of: load measuring means, proximity switches, magnetic limiting switches, dry reed contact switches, expansion measuring strips, magnetic, inductive, capacitive sensors and resistance sensors and [[~~the like~~]] combinations thereof.

11. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the sensor element is mounted within the cylinder.

12. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the sensor element [[~~works~~]] is contactless.

13. (Currently Amended) A milking unit cylinder, ~~characterized in that at least one~~ comprising:

a rapid ventilation ~~is provided that is controlled through a~~ membrane

which ~~membrane can be brought at least into~~ is movable between an open position and [[~~into~~]] a closed position.

14. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 13, ~~characterized in that for controlling the rapid ventilation,~~ wherein the rapid ventilation membrane defines a control port and the milking unit cylinder further comprises: an air controller ~~with separate control air is provided~~.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 13, ~~14 or 15, characterized in that the rapid ventilation is controlled by means of~~ and further comprising a rapid ventilation valve in communication with the rapid communication membrane.

17. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the claims 13 to 16~~ claim 13, ~~characterized in that~~ and further comprising a biasing means ~~is provided~~ that biases the rapid ventilation membrane ~~in the direction of~~ toward the closed position.

18. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the claims 13 to 16~~ claim 13, ~~characterized in that the membrane can be displaced into a ventilation position where air can be supplied through at least one rapid ventilation aperture~~ wherein the rapid ventilation membrane defines a rapid ventilation aperture for communicating air and moving the rapid ventilation membrane to a ventilation position.

19. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the claims 13 to 18~~ claim 13, ~~characterized in that on one side of~~ wherein the ~~membrane an interior space of~~ rapid ventilation membrane is disposed in the milking unit cylinder ~~is provided in which~~ to define an interior space; and the milking unit cylinder further comprises a piston [[~~is~~]] mounted in the interior space.

20. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the claims 13 to 19~~ claim 19, ~~characterized in that on the other side of the membrane~~ and further comprising a membrane control port [[~~is~~]] mounted on the side of the rapid ventilation membrane that is opposite the piston.

21. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the claims 13 to 20~~ claim 20, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the rapid ventilation membrane can be placed in [[~~the~~]] a ventilation position by applying atmospheric pressure in the interior space and by applying subpressure to the membrane control port.

22. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to ~~at least one of the claims 1 to 12~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that at least one~~ and further comprising a rapid ventilation [[~~with~~]] membrane and a rapid ventilation valve ~~is provided~~ which can ~~be placed at least into~~ move between an open position and a closed position.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Currently Amended) A method for automatically starting a milking process ~~wherein~~ comprising the steps of:

holding a milking unit;

[[~~triggers~~]] triggering a start signal; and

rapidly ~~ventilation occurs~~ ventilating a milking unit cylinder.

25. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 24 ~~wherein~~ and further comprising the step of lifting a milking unit to trigger[[s]] a start signal.

26. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 24 [[~~or 25~~]] wherein the step of:

rapidly ~~ventilation occurs through additional~~ ventilating the milking unit cylinder

comprises the step of:

ventilating gas through a plurality of ventilation apertures.

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)